

**LÁSZLÓ KOMÁROMI¹,
KENNETH BERNARD²,
NÁNDOR KOMÁROMI³**

**ADULT EDUCATION
ON AN ENTERPRISE BASIS
INTERIM RESULTS FROM A EUROPEAN TRANS-
NATIONAL CO-OPERATION PROGRAMME**

INTRODUCTION

Education is business and we are in the business of education. We are involved in the business whether we write study materials, counsel students, administer course programmes or market potential courses of study. While the state subsidised educational sector may disburse certain amounts of money, those involved in the business of education – and not only in the private sector – usually have to generate at least some of their own resources. If the aim of an educational institution is to provide improved tuition, across a widening range of subjects, there needs to be an opportunity to create more income from the business.

Everyone is involved seeing that this happens and thus everyone has a marketing role to play. That is why education must be treated as a business, and why the marketing is, both strategically and tactically, so important.

¹ Marketing director, SZÁMALK Training and Consulting Centre, Budapest.

² Professor, Marketing Institute, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow.

³ Professor, International Marketing Department, Budapest Business School and head of Marketing Research Department, SZI University.

MARKETING AND EDUCATION

Several thousands of educational enterprises of different sizes have appeared in the educational market, which has resulted in continual *intensification of competition*. The necessity for comprehensive application of the concepts and practices of marketing in the field of adult education was perhaps first recognised in the 1970s in the United States of America, when the rate of growth in the number of undergraduates began to diminish considerably. Unfavourable forecasts induced hundreds of colleges to look for new solutions. Representatives of higher education institutions argued about the possible solution of the problem at conferences and considered the possibilities of applying *marketing principles* to promotion and development of higher education. Not surprisingly, the business-related sector, which had the most direct experience in the study of consumers, took up the ideas and made the most immediate impact on the market-place.[1]

However, even in North America and Western Europe, in the context of education, the application of services marketing principles and the conduct of Public Relations activities are still imperfectly reconciled. There is a general lack of grounding in scientifically executed research and, as a result, education is largely regarded as lying in the not-for-profit sphere. Extensive scientific research results connected with the field of educational marketing have still to appear and only a small number of experienced individuals have emerged as acknowledged, competent experts.

A similar situation applies in Hungary. Until recent years, it was accepted without question that, in the state-owned institutions, education was provided entirely on a *non-profit* basis. Originally, the perception was that the educational programme was the 'product' and the student was the 'consumer', so a philosophy of *Product Marketing* was followed. However, it became recognised that this was inappropriate, since education is not a product, but a service. Consumers of education may be not only individual students, but may also include organisations that take deliberate care over the inner training and development of their employees; whilst other customer publics may include family members and those who finance or sponsor participation in the activity.

The resolution of the problem of devising a marketing programme where the end-consumer is not at its single epicentre may be seen as a case for so-called *Situation Marketing*, where orientation is to a complex situation rather than directly to a single consumer segment. Students (consumers) do not necessarily need to represent the epicentre, because formulation of the marketing mix is determined by a complex multi-customer environment.

Since the early 1980s education has been recognised as falling into the domain of *Services Marketing*. In line with most definitions, marketing in higher education includes those activities which are carried out by the institution in order to develop optimal exchange relations with its target markets. On the basis of the forecast numbers of students at adult educational institutions, competition for students is intensifying across the entire educational market. That in turn requires monitoring of rivals' activity in order to build an effective marketing programme.

Numerous strategies have been developed the alignment of supply and demand, some of which can be applied in adult education. *'Flexible'*, *'Open'* and *'Distance'* forms of learning that are designed to fulfil the social as well as the educational needs of customers are becoming increasingly prominent, especially in the field of adult or mature student education. In each case institutions may need to use different marketing strategies and tools to gain the target group's favour. A particularly challenging area for marketing of education exists when the target student groups are located in different countries, or even across continents.

A considerable number of higher educational institutions apply several techniques that have proved successful in profit-orientated marketing. In other educational sectors, to date such techniques seem to have been concentrated largely among privately owned colleges, where the aim is not only the transfer of knowledge, but also the achievement of profit. [2] Whilst practice varies across countries, such a trend appears to apply among business-related colleges perhaps more than other types of educational or training establishments

A NEED FOR IMPROVEMENT

Despite recognition of the situation outlined above, practitioners from European institutions involved in adult education have developed no practical device by which they could assess, precisely and in advance, the individual needs of participants in adult education. If such means were to exist, it would then be possible to provide study programmes precisely matching institutions' own requirements and capabilities with the demands and expectations of the student/labour markets.

The fact that there are no Handbooks, Guides or Manuals offering assistance with such issues available in the European professional literature exemplifies the novelty of the whole subject area. More immediately, there appears to be a particular absence of any material which deals with aspects of the marketing of adult education in an advisory or instructional format. Marketing training programmes do not deal with this topic. These factors make development of a comparative evaluation of marketing techniques in the field of adult education and training especially topical.

THE 'EDUMARKET' PROJECT

A programme entitled *'Application of Marketing Methods and Tools in Life-Long Learning'* is being implemented in 2001/2002, by a consortium of four European partners, within the framework of the SOCRATES 'GRUNTVIG' programme:

- SZÁMALK Training and Consulting Centre (HU)
- University of Porto (PT)
- University of Strathclyde (UK)
- International Management Education of Marketing Institute (FI)

The aim of the project

The prime objective of the project was defined in terms of providing a ***practical tool*** to assist educational institutions in the fields of *Open* and *Distance Learning* and *Adult Education* with provision and marketing of programmes precisely targeted at learners' demands and those of the employment market.

Through enhanced trans-national co-operation, the project aims further to encourage the development of a pan-European appreciation of adult education. It endeavours to promote innovation in, improve the quality of and facilitate access to learning provision for people who, at whatever stage of their life, wish to learn and to improve their employability by developing their skills base.

Expected Project Outcomes

- Clarification of the place of ***educational marketing*** in terms of Product and/or Services Marketing
- Comparative ***analysis of the marketing activities*** of not-for-profit and profit-orientated adult educational institutions across several European countries
- Definition of characteristic marketing activities for state-of-the-art formats of ***Open and Distance Learning*** education
- Evaluation of ***quality of educational services***, taking account of the complexity of measuring service quality and identification of factors influencing quality
- Working out and practical testing of ***survey techniques*** which are suitable to evaluate the quality of services in the field of ODL and continuing education
- Identification of ***marketing communication techniques*** and ***tools*** that can be most effectively applied, relative to the profiles of the institutions and the target markets.
- Development of a methodology to provide effective support for strategic ***marketing decision making*** in adult education institutions.
- Development of a ***practical Guide*** and ***multimedia CD-ROM*** supported by research and case material
- Organise ***information sessions, seminars and marketing courses*** for managers of educational institutions.

In the first year of the project, the partners undertook a series of four parallel surveys to attempt to define the general characteristics of the adult education market from a 'Marketing' point of view. This article deals with the interim results of the four national surveys.

Education Market Overview

Across Europe, the market for adult education provision is fragmented, both along national lines and also according to the type of institution providing the service. The few pre-existent full-time and/or adult/continuing education centres that were directed centrally and easy to survey have altered significantly. Different kinds of institutions, firms and enterprises dealing with education and educa-

tional organisation have appeared, first of all in the language education market and then more widely across the field of training activity.

In most countries, the provision of education is an activity which is subject to a range of controls – both statutory and professional. The existence of these conditions (whether or not they amount to a formal ‘licensing process’) is designed to ensure a degree of professional competence and skill and thus to provide a measure of re-assurance for the intending student and the prospective employer. There are therefore limits on the establishment of institutions to provide educational programmes, although the nature and severity of these controls varies from country to country. However, mere possession of an ‘official’ licence does not, in itself, provide any guarantee of acceptable quality, or educational standard or the availability of a recognised qualification that is really utilisable.

Post-Secondary School Education

There is a wide variety of terminology in use to describe a range of types of post-secondary school educational activity. For the purposes of this study, these activities are all classified as being part of the ‘Higher’ or ‘Tertiary’ education environment. However, these terms are not exactly synonymous with the commonly used phrase ‘Adult’ education. This is more generally understood to refer to education of a part-time nature; perhaps (although not exclusively) of a vocationally-related nature; sometimes classified as ‘Continuing Professional Development’; sometimes (but not always) leading to the award of formal qualifications, and often available without limit of age or prior experience.

The characteristics of the market and programmes offered are therefore very varied, as outlined below.

Provision of educational programmes ranges from 1-2 day training programmes to include courses taking as long as 2-3 years. Similarly, the range of syllabi has become wider primarily in accordance with changing market needs.

Participants in higher education can be divided into to different groups: those who continue their studies in higher education directly after leaving secondary school and those who study at a university or college later in life, within the broad framework of adult education. The latter usually work, are older and attend university or college part time in the evenings and/or at weekends.

More and more among the traditional higher educational institutions aim at this market and expect to recruit adult learners via consumer oriented study programmes. One disadvantage of part time programmes is that students do not always have a strong relationship with their fellows, and cannot always take part in common university programs. Despite this, the general model is developing rapidly because the idea of a university education (or at least of a qualification) is widely attractive to consumer classes.

Distance education is a fast spreading innovation in the education and training system. Its use is widening further with user-friendly computer programmes through which students and tutors can connect to the Internet or other information networks.

The growth of demand has attracted a large number of education organisations as potential providers. Each tends to have its own character, usually developed to

serve a particular niche. Each has its own unique combination of ownership structure, mission, capabilities, courses offered, regional role, history, image and a way to develop its own competitive advantage. The market has so far been technically easy to enter. An entrant person or organisation, with an interesting subject, who can make its message heard, may become a successful niche player overnight. Investment barriers have traditionally been low – and still are for a small enterprise. Educational organisations with aspirations to grow and become large, influential players face increasing and serious investments in information technology and in development of both product and of key personnel.

The tertiary level of the official education system is an important part of the total adult education market. It is generally considered to do its job well, and increasing high proportions of national populations obtain Bachelor or higher levels of degree. Universities and polytechnics are also beginning to increase their stake in Open Adult Education (OAE). The market for OAE has, however, traditionally been largely in the hands of vocationally dominated adult education organisations. In many countries these have included private-sector providers, sometimes alongside public-sector institutions seen as representing a 'half-way house' between secondary education and conventional universities or polytechnics. In The United Kingdom for example, the OAE market is dominated by approximately 250 Colleges of Further Education who receive at least partial state funding, plus an indeterminate number of private sector organisations. By comparison, in Finland, OAE is largely in the hands of a hundred-odd open vocational adult education organisations. These serve both the individual and the corporate market, offering a wide range of alternatives. Of these hundred, one third are large, established organisations, whilst the rest are vary considerably with respect to size and professional standards. Many of these organisations are very good in some subject areas; many are riding a fashion wave offering the latest 'ism' – and some are outright fly-by-night operators. The difference between corporate education and company-specific consultancy is sometimes hazy and now all levels of providers have had to learn to cope with increasing competition. [3]

Some Characteristics of Educational Enterprises

- Education is an infrastructure- and salaried staff-demanding activity. It requires significant investment in buildings and personnel and – increasingly – in computer-based technological infrastructures
- It requires work force (teachers) with appropriate pedagogical knowledge. In many countries, there is no real problem securing employees for private sector educational enterprises since those working in state educational system may also be employed on a part-time basis.
- An educational 'business' enterprise requires a relatively low level of trade capital since education is predominantly a service, where the price (tuition fee) is normally paid partly or entirely in advance.

Market Structure

The market situation at the present time shows a number of interesting and challenging features. There is a large and rising demand for continuing education and vocational training since growing numbers of people cannot retain employment in their original profession, whilst more and more young school leavers are unable to find permanent work at all.

Demand for the 'product' is thus quite high, although providers' solvency is not always satisfactory – despite the high prices charged for certain courses. Supply is also large and competition is intense. Almost all organisations in the education business offer fashionable courses such as management training and marketing.

It is difficult for the potential consumer to find his or her way in this 'circular' market.

The main problems of the education market

One part of the problem derives from certain shortcomings in terms of professional skills and another from unethical behaviour on the part of some of the organisational players. It is important for there to be some control over the training and preparation of teachers and over the physical and intellectual/professional competencies of the educational institutions. On the other side, ethical behaviour – for example in the context of authenticity of advertisement promises would also be essential. An external professional organisation could possibly act as a control and monitoring assurance agency.

An important aspect of remaining competitive is to be able to offer training which identifies and accommodates changes in the market environment. Educators must be able to recognise in advance where there will be training needs and these should be concentrated on (and ideally anticipated) in programme design. Overbidding is characteristic in this field. Many promise everything in order to secure an appropriate number of applicants for their courses. Such efforts to catch the buyer at any price results in promises that are obviously false to the point of incredulity – like, for example a one-week language course, which promises acquisition of language knowledge at fluent conversational level starting from the very beginning.

Such false claims confuse the consumer if there is no means of verifying which organisations are authorised or accredited to offer the course or training programme leading to any particular qualification. It can come as an unpleasant surprise when, after completing the course, the person begins to look for a job armed with a certificate or diploma with no idea of how much this qualification is worth or is not worth. The only way out of such a dilemma can be on the basis of assured product quality, where high-level education provides reliable knowledge. [4]

TRENDS IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEMS DEVELOPMENT

From the secondary data available from the partner countries, a number of clear trends appear in the evolution of educational product offerings. For clarity, at this stage these are grouped under six broad headings and will be subject to further evaluation in remaining stages of the research.

- Preparation for competition in the Knowledge-based global economy
 - ⇒ International institutional articulation/collaboration agreements based on national standards
 - ⇒ Competency-based, modular curricula which enhance world wide qualification portability
 - ⇒ Delivery systems based on information technology enables access and mobility
- Integration of 'Education' and 'Training'
 - ⇒ Focus on Life-long Learning, developing a learning culture and learning society
 - ⇒ Emphasis on strong basic skills (communications, mathematics, technology)
 - ⇒ Preparation for restructured work organisations (teamwork, problem-solving, creativity, learning skills)
- Creation of partnerships and alliances
 - ⇒ Incorporating industry and business standards into curricula through advisory groups, co-operative education, exchanges, applied research programmes and sharing of resources
 - ⇒ Development of multi-skilled labour forces
 - ⇒ Responsive, flexible delivery systems for the employed
- Increased emphasis on Quality Assurance
 - ⇒ More rigorous accreditation of providers
 - ⇒ Concern with benchmarking and best practice
 - ⇒ More (and more effective) assessment and monitoring of provision
- Greater responsiveness to client needs
 - ⇒ Training more driven by market influences
 - ⇒ Creation of service standards for better customer service
 - ⇒ Strengthening of non-traditional delivery systems
- Major initiatives to strengthen school-to-work programmes
 - ⇒ Time based apprenticeships being replaced by competency based programmes
 - ⇒ Strengthening of occupationally based secondary school programmes
 - ⇒ Traineeships replacing pre-apprenticeship programmes

Identification of players and strategies

In the market for adult training in the four partner countries there are about 4000-4500 entrepreneurially-orientated suppliers in competition. Between two thirds and three quarters of these are private organisations. These organisations

deal with approximately 300,000 people yearly, worth collectively around 15-20 milliard Hungarian Forint.

There is clearly a need for a market where the offerings of educational suppliers accommodate the demand. Employees establish a claim for education in the market – looking for such educational programmes, whose completion and the skills acquired are expected to enable them to maximise their labour market chances.

Educational suppliers can be divided into two principal groups:

- Schools or other institutions accredited by the state (the state system)
- Non-profit organisations, private enterprises (educational enterprises)

Institutions belonging to the state system can deliver non-state system training programmes practically without any restriction, while educational enterprises are allowed to offer state system training programmes only under the conditions laid down in educational laws.

The real turning point in the widening of the education market in Hungary was the Vocational Training Act, which resulted in the possibility of vocational training being delivered in the enterprise system, away from the state system. It also made it easier for enterprises to enter the market by introducing standardisation of vocational training programmes (National Training List). The role of private educational enterprises is expected to strengthen further in the future. Several thousand people take part in higher education in a format delivered by the entrepreneurial sector and this number is expected to grow significantly in the future –

- gaining ground against state-delivered post-secondary school providers, currently expanding intensively in the higher education system
- bringing further expansion of private higher education
- because of the growing practice spread of reimbursing tuition fees to those undertaking part time basic and/or continuing training in higher education institutions.

Training carried out on an ‘enterprise’ basis can be supported by the state if that support is compatible with the provisions of the programme. Thus the ‘enterprise’ segment contains training programmes financed by labour centres, for example.

The managements of many institutions still regard ‘marketing’ as being synonymous with ‘promotion’ and are deterred by aggressive promotion campaigns. The philosophy of marketing is of course much deeper and wider. Schools cannot be identified with purely commercial companies since they operate in totally different markets: they do not produce consumer goods but services and serve different target groups with different services. That is why their transactions are ‘different’ and that is why they need to develop specific methods and techniques for the optimisation of transactions and to choose their own forms of expression.

The customers

A large part of the total volumes of money spent and student participation classified as ‘Open Adult Education’ in the statistics is not really professional or vocational in nature or intent. Rather, it is focused on programmes aimed at self-

improvement, life-style and even recreational motives of the students. Retired persons frequent many such programmes.

The demand for 'vocational' adult education has grown dramatically over the past decade, both in the individual and corporate segments. Individuals see a need to prepare themselves for work and career development or change. Corporations wish to develop their human resources and may either organise company-specific programmes or support individual studies on the part of their personnel. It is estimated that corporations pay for more than 50% of the total spending for vocational adult education.

Student Segmentation

The characteristics of the student potential in the 'individual' sector are changing rapidly and seem to be polarising into two categories: the smart and demanding ones (X) and those who look for more basic skills (Y). These categories require very different educational and marketing approaches.

Category X is the faster growing segment. A rapidly increasing proportion of these students have a knowledge of two or three foreign languages, English usually being at the top of the list. They tend already to hold university degrees and/or to have undertaken other prior professional training. They tend to be familiar with IT (in particular the PC) and to use a computer daily both at work and at home, typically with access to the internet. These students are already working in specialist or managerial positions. As customers they have very specific requirements for what they expect to buy, and expect value for their money, in the shape of practical, working, cost-effective solutions. Their motivation is high and they pay more – or at least as much – attention to what they really learn as to the diplomas. If they do not feel they get what they bargained for, they are ready to complain.

Category Y students tend to be those who left school at an early stage. Their knowledge of languages is superficial or non-existent in practice. They are frequently unemployed or work in routine positions. The better-motivated ones have sought and enrolled for courses at their own initiatives. Others are directed to 'appropriate' courses by the authorities or employers. Formal proof of attendance and of having 'passed' the course are very important.

In the corporate sector, companies are tending to increase their investment in education in the long term, but there seems likely to be much short-term variation in participation levels and topics. Corporate customers are outsourcing their own training functions and act very professionally as buyers. They are cost-conscious and expect a sharp focus on their particular needs in the programmes.

In domestic markets, institutions establish and maintain direct contact with their customers in both sectors, whilst in export markets it is customary for them to look for a 'local' educational organisation as a distributor and partner. [5]

Learner satisfaction analysis

One key factor in an educational Quality Assurance system is the ability to measure responsiveness to customer demands, which in their broadest sense rep-

resent an articulation of real needs of society. We tend to interpret these needs as they are expressed by students or financial supporters as mediums or moderators but the real source of demand is rooted in the deeper need for professional/vocational skills improvement in the employment market.

The practice of following up graduates and assessing the relevance of their studies to real market needs provides a tool for ongoing quality improvement through feedback of survey data.

It is important to examine the fitness of freshly graduated students for labour market requirements. The authors' own institutions have follow-up systems to track their graduates. These follow-up systems have some peculiar features to cope with the 'distance learning' environment and are complemented by the activities of alumni clubs. The system provides not only an analysis of a student's career but also an appraisal of the practical usefulness of their studies and projects undertaken.

One of the most interesting conclusions to arise from these follow up activities is the suggestion that adoption of distance learning has stimulated, if not actually generated, a need for life-long learning. Experience suggests that up to one third of graduated students undertake further studies.

Suppliers

Educational institutions use varying numbers of permanent personnel and of external specialist consultants. There is a trend towards trimming the permanent organisation to its core and for it to handle matters of management; to operate the daily activities of teaching; to provide some support functions for the institution, including its marketing activities. A proportion of the permanent staff may work on a part-time basis and, increasingly, contracts of employment are made on a one- or two-year basis. Other, non-core activities are frequently organised in networks or by teams using outside supplier resources, not least as a safeguard against changes that may occur in the volumes and structure of the activities of the institution.

Individual external experts are used for development of courses, production of materials, lecturing and as 'distance' tutors. Finding, assimilating and maintaining the network of experts are very important management functions. This network is also very important for the marketing function, for this type of person is usually part of an active network of opinion leaders. Other support functions can also be outsourced – such as print and audiovisual production, IT-support, accounting, real estate management and security, among others. An outsourcing institution must have sufficient professionalism to organise, monitor and control its suppliers.

A more fundamental supplier arrangement involves creation of a network of educational institutions. Traditionally, there has been more or less active exchange of 'shop talk' – involving information related to the general development of the educational environment – between educational institutions nationally and internationally. As business conditions in general become more open and international, the practice of franchising becomes more common. There tends to be a natural flow of material and programmes from more developed markets to devel-

oping markets in a particular field of education. The increasing knowledge of languages and developing IT technology make this practice easier. The key question in franchising is to negotiate an agreement, which is economically attractive for both partners. International educational 'products' very often need local adjustments, so the agreements may not be as tightly structured as in consumer product fields. [6]

Competitors organised on an Enterprise basis

In Hungary, as in many so-called 'transition' economies, *educational enterprises* evolved out of the former state continuing training and management training institutions. These institutions were transformed into enterprises at the end of the 1980s during the period of state reforms. Either the company formed from the management took it over, or it operates in the form of a 'foundation'. An inherited good infrastructure, often backed up by a national network and good system of relations with the relevant Ministries are common characteristics of such enterprises. They are often in a monopolistic position in their particular sphere in the market as methodological and examination centres have been based on a system of relationships.

The *education or training centres* of former large state companies, insurance companies and other financial institutions, which were forced to become self-financing during the economic transformation, form a similar group. Only rarely have these organisations formed national networks. They rule their respective market segments in the field of continuing training since large companies tend to favour internal training programmes.

Private educational enterprises of workers in higher education and research institutions (teachers and researchers) are a special feature of the Hungarian education market. The participants generally come from the same higher educational institution. Their full-time capacity and working time make it possible to manage enterprise development. Their educational activity does not usually spread beyond the town or the immediate region in which they are based. The infrastructure provided is slight.

Higher educational institutions also appear in the vocational training market with their own vocational training offerings. The income orientation of higher educational institutions is increasing as a result of decreasing levels of state support. Universities primarily offer courses leading to the award of a postgraduate or continuing education diploma, financed to the student by means of some form of fee refunding. Furthermore, they are developing links with the vocational training market at the same time.

Secondary schools, which are allowed carry out activity to gain income in addition to their state support, are also becoming involved with vocational training. It is frequently the case that the school arranges training programmes through a foundation. The income does not appear in the school accounts, so taxation can be more favourable.

Many other publicly financed institutions have also appeared in the education market: culture centres, pedagogical institutions, libraries, museums and so on. A

suitable infrastructure is at their disposal, their teachers are part time members of staff from public educational and higher educational institutions.

Regional retraining centres established with help from the outside world deserve special attention. They play a leading role in the retraining of the unemployed. Since they receive central support they are in an advantageous position in the education market.

Chambers, which intend to monopolise training and examination in their professional field, are also actors in the education market.

The vocational training market is therefore quite segmented. Monopolistic tendencies are fairly strong in at least one segment. The existence of formal or informal governmental intervention plays a significant role in the segmentation of market. There are several vocational training programmes whose training/examination monopoly is provided by governmental regulation with exclusive rights.

Change Factors

In considering the change factors which have apparently influenced the evolution of the market in the past few years, it is, on occasion, necessary to look further into the past as well as to try to visualise the potential future shape of the 'education business'. As MCNAIR (2000) – among others – points out, education is indeed a business, whatever the intellectual elite may wish was the opposite and the measurement of the strategic effectiveness of educational marketing plans is notoriously fraught with procedural difficulties.

In addition to the purely economic pressures which have spawned commercial interest in new delivery technologies, it is the increasing application of new technologies to the delivery process itself that is the stimulus to one of the greatest challenges to Marketing Management that has yet been devised. This same scenario applies to the provision of educational programmes just as much as in industries which have a 'high-technology' image. [7]

The Effects of Change on the Market

Overall the educational marketing environment is typified by the transition from a supply/supplier-driven economy to more of a conventional 'market-influenced' – if not actually 'market-driven' scenario. The collective effects of all of the environmental changes outlined above is to increase the need for a well-qualified work force – and indeed for a well educated society as a whole. These facts have been recognised by government and encouragement has been given for development of programmes designed to enable individuals to:

- Gain additional qualifications to make up for non-achievement whilst in the school system;
- Update qualifications to cope with new/changing needs in employment /society;
- Undertake new studies purely for social/personal purposes, leading to personal development and hence societal benefit.

These same trends have been identified by many employers. Within the UK as a whole, employers have identified long-term shortages of new recruits possessing

basic skills of literacy and numeracy as well as being well-qualified in basic areas such as engineering. The demand for enhancement of educational levels seems to be a long-term priority as well as a short-term opportunity for the education profession.

As is the case with all promotional activity, it is extremely difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of any individual activity in isolation from the others.

There are some variances in practice, it may be concluded that all institutions are taking what they consider to be appropriate and affordable steps to promote their existence and the 'products' which they have to offer. The extent to which they all succeed depends largely on the motivations of individual prospective students. Whilst some students are driven simply by the desire to obtain 'a piece of paper' signifying a qualification, many others are more influenced by the reputation of the institution concerned – even if that may entail some sort of financial or other apparent disadvantage in the short term. [8]

Managing the changes

There are real changes occurring in the environment and the tempo of the changes is accelerating. The management in many of the organisations, especially those with a long history and an established, financially supported position, has concentrated on purely educational issues. An image built on past performance may be fading or even negative in the new situation. Financial support from sources other than students' fees has become conditional or is dwindling away. Competition is real and intense. While education is the fundamental mission of these organisations, they have to be managed on business principles. This necessitates a conscious formulation and effective implementation of strategy. To be able to fulfil the mission, the objectives, concrete targets, investments and operational effectiveness of an institution need to be in order. In a fragmented market like education, there is no one formula for achieving this. Competitive advantage has to be built, based on the actual conditions and aspirations of the institution. [9]

CONCLUSIONS

A significant market for Open Adult Education does exist and there are many providers and many options available in terms of the level of provision.

The number of potential students is likely to continue to grow in response to both government policies promoting access to Adult/Higher levels of education, and also to generally increasing leisure time, which has the consequence that increasing numbers of people fall within the category of 'senior' students.

The number of providers is continuing to grow as also is the number of course offerings – of all types and at all levels – whether or not they are award-bearing.

The need for effective marketing strategies is apparent to facilitate effective competition and provision of appropriate levels of customer satisfaction.

At the present time, it seems likely that much promotional activity is less than completely effective. Steps should therefore be taken to ensure that appropriate media are used and evaluated systematically, that more pro-active methods of

communication are employed and (for ODE provision in particular), more imaginative use is made of websites – without losing the sense of personal involvement/integration of the students and the academic and administrative staff.

In addition to issues associated purely with Customer Care, it is evident that there is an on-going need to place emphasis on issues of Quality Assurance to ensure consistency of product quality and also of service provision.

Given that increasing use is likely to be made of ‘off-campus’ delivery methods, particular attention should be paid to the development of procedures to ensure uniformity of output quality and harmonisation of programme substance.

The above mentioned factors make the comparative evaluation of marketing methods and development a practical tool (a guide) for the management of the institutions in the field of education especially topical.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- [1] BERNARD K. N. (1997): ‘Customer Care, Relationship Management and Quality Assurance – The Case for Functional Integration in the Effective Marketing of Open and Distance Learning’. *Proceedings of the 6th EDEN Conference*, Budapest, Hungary.
- [2] KOMÁROMI L. (2001): ‘Making The Match between the Open and Distance Learning ‘Product’ Offering and the Target Audience’. *Proceedings of the 10th EDEN Conference*, Stockholm, Sweden.
- [3] LEPPANEN L. (1997): ‘Lessons from East-West Educational Programs’. *Proceedings of the 6th EDEN Conference*, Budapest, Hungary.
- [4] MCNAIR M. B. (2000): ‘Quality and Relationship Marketing in Service Industries: The Case of Higher Education’. *Unpublished MPhil Thesis*, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, United Kingdom.
- [5] LAMPIKOSKI K. (2001): ‘Marketing of adult education in Finland.’ *Interim research report*. Brussels.
- [6] KOMÁROMI L. (2000): ‘Marketing methods for improving service quality in ODL’. *Proceedings of the EDEN Conference*, Lisbon.
- [7] KOMÁROMI L. (2001): ‘Marketing of adult education programmes in Hungary.’ *Interim research report*. Brussels.
- [8] SOEIRO A. (2001): ‘Marketing of adult education in Portugal.’ *Interim research report*. Brussels.
- [9] BERNARD K. N. (2001): ‘The marketing of adult education programmes in UK.’ *Interim research report*. Brussels.